

Note

Steinchisma laxa (Sw.) Zuloaga, the correct name for *Cliffordiochloa parvispiculata* B.K.Simon

In a recent paper describing the new South American panicoid genus *Canastra* (Morrone *et al.* 2001) the authors suggested that the genus *Cliffordiochloa* (Simon 1992) is likely to be conspecific with *Panicum laxum*, a C₃ species from South America. I have followed up this suggestion at the Queensland Herbarium, by comparing material of the 12 sheets of *Panicum laxum* in the BRI exotic collection with type material of *Cliffordiochloa parvispicula* and was able to confirm the authors to be correct.

The genus *Panicum*, as currently circumscribed is still highly polyphyletic (Aliscioni *et al.* 2003, Zuloaga *et al.* 2000), despite the considerable reduction in species numbers over the last two centuries with the segregation of groups of species into separate genera (Chase 1911, Palisot de Beauvois 1812, Stapf 1919–1920, Hughes 1923, Stapf & Hubbard 1930–1934). Further nomenclatural changes have been made for some of the clades discovered within the genus in more recent times. Zuloaga (1987) listed six subgenera of *Panicum* from the New World and of these *Phanopyrum*, *Dichantherium* and *Steinchisma* have been elevated to generic rank by various authors (Aliscioni *et al.* 2003). *Megathyrsus* is elevated to generic rank in the current issue of this journal (Simon & Jacobs 2003).

In a recent update on the current status of *Panicum* worldwide (Aliscioni *et al.* 2003) it is recommended that the name *Panicum* be restricted to the subgenus *Panicum*, which is monophyletic and consists of five sections. Of the former members of the subgenus *Phanopyrum* in the sense of Zuloaga (1987), only one is retained in the genus *Phanopyrum*, with the remainder of the species needing to be segregated from *Panicum s.l.* “as new genera or within existing genera of the Paniceae” (Aliscioni *et al.* 2003). In the latter treatment the genus *Dichantherium* is represented by 55 New World species and *Steinchisma* by seven

New World species. The latter includes *Panicum laxum*, the type species of sect. *Laxa* of the subgenus *Phanopyrum* of Zuloaga (1987). On the basis of morphology (enlargement of the lower palea and the upper floret with compound papillae) and molecular evidence this species falls within the *Steinchisma* clade both on cladistic (Zuloaga 1992) and phenetic (Zuloaga *et al.* 1993) analyses.

S. laxa is the second member of the New World genus *Steinchisma* to be recorded in Australia and its presence is similar to a previous report of another American panicoid grass, *Steinchisma hians* (Elliot) Nash, originally nominated as the Australian endemic genus *Fasciculochloa* (Simon & Weiller 1995) and later synonymised (Simon 1999). Thus far only two naturalised specimens of *Steinchisma laxa* have been collected in Australia from one locality, Mena Creek Valley, North Queensland, where it is confined to water channels, although forming a “thick mat and spreading quickly”. Given its potential to become a weed this species in North Queensland should be monitored for distribution and spread since first recorded in 1983.

A prostrate form of this species was introduced from Colonia Benitez, Argentina in 1971 by CSIRO under CPI53932 and selected by J.R. Wilson as having potential as a turf grass for shaded conditions, as cv. ‘Shadegro’ (Anon. 1994). It is presently established in a small area of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Mt Coot-tha.

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